

THE FUNCTION OF NARRATIVE IN POST-MODERNISM

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Contemporary world literature is still within the discourse of post-modernism irrespective of the fact that some countries have long been speaking about its end and about its substitution by another trend, for instance, alter-modernism. However, it is not a simple case as far as, for the sake of artistic expression, post-modernism applied all the currently available techniques. It turned into a certain literary enigma in which seemingly well-known categories of form and content stepped forth in a totally novel way. This trend has not created an essentially new literary technique, a new aspect determining poetics, but it already managed to accommodate available methods, artistic images, literary techniques into a new pattern, owing to which it defined both its status and principles as those of a literary trend.

One of the principal milestones of post-modernism is cultural experience of past epochs. Old literature, already created style elements, worldview insights are a certain foundation for a post-modernist writer because s/he applies exclusively everything. In this case, narrative sources are not just determiners of the historical theme of a work but rather become a feature of the trend.

Narrative can be used in **two meanings** in post-modernism: **first, as a narrative form of a text**, when an author tells a story and does not describe an action; characters do not conduct the flow of narration; it is under control of a writer, applying an essayist manner of writing; **second, when author uses narrative materials from history, from the past**, and the material should not necessarily be a historical source. It incorporates a certain popular saying, something that happened in a certain epoch, biblical or folklore plot.

In Georgian post-modernist literature, narrative is applied in both senses. On the one hand, authors, tell a story and return its earlier implication to the Greek word *epos*. On the other hand, being based on narrative information, they create a post-modernistically reconstructed version of the past and, by means

comments, genre mixture, remarks and/or occasionalisms, increase opportunities of allusion, also their interpretations, within the locales of both those of their and a reader's discourse.

Writers do their best to accommodate their works to orders of all layers of public and, thus, make them so called bestsellers. A special effect is produced by a discovery and elaboration of something sensational within a narrative. This phenomenon has been significant not only for the post-modernist trend but also for the post-modernist epoch. Discovery of a sensation or turning a story into a sensation evokes post-modernist sentiments. Literature can be said to successfully incorporate advertizing techniques when trying to wrap an already known materials as attractively as possible and to present it to reader as a something new. In this case, a post-modernist writer is unable to offer a reader something new; therefore, s/he has to pick a historical fact or event as a raw material to be processed in a post-modernist way and, travestied, to be offered to a recipient.

In Georgian literature, we come across a rather original form in *Gurji Khatun* by D. Turashvili. The main character has the name of Queen Tamar, her grandmother; she was thirteen when she was sent to marry Prince of Konya; the Georgian queen was of rare beauty and smartness. In the novel, she is spoken about by both her contemporaries and people from various epochs and statuses, whose narratives identify Tamar's complete portrait; however, the writer manages to keep her personality as mystical and clandestine.

In terms of its composition, *Gurji Khatun* is a typical post-modernist writing. In order to define its genre, it will be necessary to establish new terminology, as far as it will not be just a novel, a documentary essay, scholarly investigation, memoir, interview, but rather everything together. If we study individual parts of the work, we will see that most of them are documentary; however, it is peculiar to post-modernism. Documentary prose is appended with amazing lyricism; this detail seems to be due to the thematic nuance; the documentary joins the essayist trend and it also incorporates elements, defining its artistic character; the mixture of all these makes up a poly-genre text of a post-

modernist modality. Besides, in this specific case, a narrative has the primary function. It is used in both meanings. In *Gurji Khatun*, the writer allocates a large space to meta-text. He provides both the description of the creative process and he indicates the place where he started writing from; he names specific individuals who supported him in collecting materials about Gurji Khatun (the Turkish for Georgian queen); the author seems to roam through the seven centuries long chronotope together with a reader; by shaping his work as a scholarly research, he tries to place it within the post-modernist locale.

The work has several temporal locales: Gurji Khatun's epoch proper, late Middle Ages, 20th century, and a so called non-temporal, that is, hyper-temporal period. All temporal locales have their narrators. The author chooses a corresponding language tissue; he does not spare the stages of the development of the Georgian writing and includes the documents, written in various historical versions of the alphabet. As for the narrators, they are both historical personalities, historians, and individuals, evoked by the writer's fantasy, having had to do at least something with Gurji Khatun. The writer also creates a simulacrum. This is a certain At-Tiflis, an Arab poet, whose narrative text starts in the 13th century and reaches our days. He seems to be the only personality from whom the writer can learn more, for instance, how the queen disappeared. However, when the author almost finds him hoping to uncover everything, he finds At-Tiflis deceased. The time-roaming character forever keeps the secret of the Georgian queen.

The post-modernist character of the work is made up with its collage composition. There is no plot, no compositional center, if not the story about the Queen of Konya is regarded as such. Texts of various genres and functions are united in order to render the story of Gurji Khatun. However, no chronological principle is kept here. The writer seems to provide a recipient with half-baked products by means of which a reader himself/herself will create a sad story of Tamar. The association of the work with post-modernism has not been confirmed only with formal properties. In the meta-text, D. Turashvili mentions to Milorad Pavić, a Serbian post-modernist writer, and refers to his views about similarities between writing of books

and architecture, and, while describing the creative process, he states that some the texts were a foundation and others were walls, some of them were meant for balconies and a roof; others were used for ornaments. The fact, that the author has well conceptualized the post-modernist-format of his work, is not conspicuous by just mentioning Milorad Pavić. At the end of the text he seems to go to visit the Arab poet and learns about his death from A bathhouse attendant from Tbilisi who name is Suleiman Derrida Ogli. “Ogli” is the Turkish for “a son.” Hence, the bathhouse attendant from Tbilisi is a son of Derrida. *With this, the author hints that he composed his work based on Derrida’s ideas. First, he got hold of the Gurji Khatun’s story, broken into thousand pieces, and then assembled it thoroughly, based on Derrida’s deconstruction principle.*